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MONGOLIAN AUTONOMY AND LOCAL ADMINISTRATION

By Ch'i K'e

I

Last year at the time of the National Assembly our Mongolian brothers demanded autonomy and a local administrative system for Mongolia, which led to earnest discussion among intelligent persons. The important problem of border government has been debated for many years and has been studied by many persons. Although no immediate and satisfactory solution has been reached, nevertheless, such principles as "All Mongolian leagues and banners will have local autonomy legally determined" (Sec 119), and "the Nation should give legitimate protection to all races in the border regions, and give special encouragement to the matter of local autonomy" (Sec 168) are clearly stated in the constitution. This is because Mongolian autonomy and Mongolian local administration concern the preservation of order throughout the sparsely settled territory from the Northeast to Sinkiang. The current government must regard these principles as a weighty commission imposed by the constitution. They also deserve careful study by our citizens.

In all the 36 years since the founding of the Republic, there has been no satisfactory policy for governing Mongolia. We must admit this as a great disappointment. Moreover, the loss of Outer Mongolia is due to the government's lack of a genuine border policy. Not only must China, having come to the eve of constitutional government, organize an administration for this large portion of her territory, but, of even greater importance, she must also

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study this problem carefully and decide on an intelligent course of action. This is imperative because of the Mongols' urgent demands for autonomy and the importance of their territory from the standpoint of national defense. The Mongolian question has lost none of its importance, even though, because of economic stress and military tension, our people's attention has been focussed on prices and war news for over a year. We hear now that the "Plan for Autonomy of the Mongolian Banners" is under study by the Executive Yuan, as provided for by the constitution. Besides eagerly hoping to see the substance of these laws, we want to describe it briefly from our own viewpoint.

II

Our Mongolian brothers are to be found in 11 provinces from Heilungkiang to Sinkiang. Though not numerous, they are moved by a history of former glory to strive to be no longer backward. The current center of their interest is in self-government, a goal for which they have struggled untiringly for many years. Disturbances caused by certain elements among them, abetted by imperialist intrigues, have often caused unfortunate changes, including the secession of Outer Mongolia and unceasing unrest in Inner Mongolia. Yet, once our principles are clarified, all these problems can be happily settled, whatever the difficulties may be. How much more easily could a solution be found if an organic relationship between the Mongols and the Chinese had been established long ago!

The demands our Mongolian brothers are now making of the government can be summed up as (1) the granting of autonomy, and (2) the definition of the machinery of self-government. The way to settlement lies in defining the principles of genuine autonomy. An efficient system of autonomy is easy to set up. The setting up of a progressive system is a full manifestation of self-government. This is the Mongols' demand and our government's duty. Both sides should have but a single aim. The present problems lie only in differences of interpretation and procedure.

Our Mongolian brothers should, and must, practice autonomy. This is axiomatic, because the political system of the Chinese Republic has "local autonomy" as its firm basis. In addition to the principle of "equality of races" in the constitution, there is a clause clearly stating that the government should specially encourage local autonomy among the peoples of the border regions. Thus, the Mongols have a specific legal basis for implementing autonomy.

Let us look at the postwar attitude of the government. Last year the third meeting of the Central Committee of the Sixth Plenary Congress of the Kuomintang made these decisions as to border regions: "In the constitution of a united republic under the principles of a five-power constitution based on the San Min Chu I, the right of autonomy of races in the border regions shall be protected" and "the central authority shall make just decisions, according to actual local conditions, as to the machinery for autonomy in each border region — in regard to Inner Mongolia to restore the Political Committee for Mongolian Autonomy, and to distinguish clearly the powers of banner governments and those of the provinces and hsien."

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After this, the National Assembly clearly placed these principles in the constitution. Although Mongols were dissatisfied because Mongolian autonomy was not given more importance in the constitution, nevertheless, this showed clearly the National Assembly's concern over this question.

Suppose that in the process of pushing through the constitution this weighty question had been decided hastily. Such neglect would have caused no end of trouble. In view of the conditions at the time and the two differing opinions on the matter, it is obvious that there would have been great difficulty in arriving at a mutually acceptable and workable decision. Consequently, it was entirely suitable to apply the principle of "giving special encouragement" and referring this question to the government for planning and legislation. This course of action should be acceptable to both the nation and the Mongols. Furthermore, according to the published regulations for elections, the races of the border regions are favored in the assignment of seats in the National Assembly and the Legislative Yuan. For instance, although the population of the Mongolian leagues and banners is less than 10,000, each banner has four seats in the Assembly and at least one in the Legislative Yuan. Compare this with the rule that each hsien city has one seat in the Assembly and each provincial city under five million has five seats in the Legislative Yuan. Thus we can see that Mongols have a preferred position in the national elections. In the resolutions passed by the Sixth Kuomintang Congress third meeting of the Central Committee /?/ this year, in the sections dealing with border governments, there is this in addition to an expression of support for the constitution's statement: "The relation of Mongol banners with cities and counties, together with present laws, should be carefully studied by the government, and needed reforms instituted." The Mongolian and Tibetan questions were earnestly discussed in the fourth meeting of the People's Political Council. While no concrete reforms have yet taken place, there is ample proof that both official and popular organs are seeking Mongolian autonomy. It is obvious that the intentions of the government coincide with the demands of the Mongols.

Here, however, we must consider wh[illegible]golian "autonomy" means. According to political theory and int[illegible]al practice, "autonomy" refers to "official rule." The people in a definite administrative area either directly or through elected representatives decide on and carry out matters of common interest in that area. While the sphere of autonomy differs only in scope, the central government's control may be more or less strict. Moreover, autonomy may exist in a single-system nation or in a federated nation, and autonomy does not necessarily depend on whether the authority is centralized or decentralized. In any event, an autonomous administration is certainly a link in the nation's political system. Autonomy is a method of expressing the people's will under the full principle of the nation's territorial sovereignty; otherwise it cannot be called autonomy. The basis of China's constitution is local self-government under a system of equal rights. If the "autonomy" which the Mongols demand is really consistent with this interpretation, it should be instituted and should be welcomed. The government should take special pains to promote autonomy so as to encourage the minority races.

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A few Mongolian princes, such as Prince Teh, and some impetuous Mongolian youths demanded "autonomy" in 1931. Their demands, which have been discussed by Mongolian leaders during the past 2 years, are confused with "self-determination." Consequently, when people hear of Mongolian autonomy, they associate it with "independence" and "secession" and such undesirable concepts. Actually, the individuals concerned in this movement have a mistaken racial consciousness, whether deliberate or not. The race question in the Republic of China ought to have been satisfactorily settled long ago in accord with the spirit of the founding of the nation. Racial equality is really an earnestly sought goal of our government, and we have actually already reached a certain degree of equality of position and opportunity.

The cause of unity is not obstructed even by unhealthy ideas of racial discrimination held by a few individuals or practiced by some officials. The Mongols and the Chinese Republic have already formed a relationship of protection rather than of antagonism, a far different relationship than that between Britain and such colonies as India. Accordingly, the Mongolian demand for autonomy need not include a hint of separation; still less need it follow the Outer Mongolian course of "autonomy" as a step to "independence." The Mongols undoubtedly agree with us in this premise. Therefore, although Mongolian autonomy may differ in form from autonomy in other regions, it is fundamentally not at all dissimilar. Once this point is granted, the most perplexing problems of Mongolian autonomy can be solved.

III

First, in studying the machinery of Mongolian autonomy, we should discuss the history and present state of the Mongolian leagues and banners. Before the Manchus came south of the Great Wall, the Mongols were tribes whose inner bond was kinship, in a Khanate society, without concrete political organization. After the Manchus seized China, in order to pacify the Mongolian regions and strengthen their own rule, and to widen the gulf between Mongols and Hans, and create the same hatred [against Mongols] as for Manchus, they took advantage of small groups of Mongols being separated according to their pasture grounds, and divided the Mongols into banners similar to the original Manchu eight-banner military system, demarcated the pasturelands, and set up hereditary jassaks as chiefs. This is the origin of the banners, which the Mongols today hold on to so tightly as units for self-government.

However, since these banners were formed according to the Manchu prototype, at first they were only military organizations, and had very little political meaning. Besides the jassaks there are many princes and nobles and other orders of functionaries, mostly military, for the banners are civil-military organizations, which, while having civil duties, stress food supply and defense. The former jassak palaces have become banner executive headquarters. A number of banners are combined into a league, with a league chairmanship filled by the banner chiefs in turn, with terms of 10 years. There are also one or two deputy chairmen (sometimes none) and a defense chief.

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At first the league had no definite organization, and was merely a clearinghouse for the banners. Meetings were held once every 3 years, at which matters of common interest were discussed and disputes between banners settled. As a rule it had no continuous functions so it could not be called a political unit. Later, as the leagues grew, matters awaiting league decision became more complex, and under the Republic a "League Chairman's Office," which has now become the League Government, was set up. Its chief functions are to guide and administer armies and finances, without interfering in the banner's affairs. As a matter of fact, in many places, leagues have not been set up.

In Manchu times there were 24 tribes in Inner Mongolia, making 6 leagues and 49 banners. Outer Mongolia and its outlying regions (including Sinkiang) had 7 leagues and 117 banners, while the 6 Mongolian tribes of Tsinghai were divided into 2 leagues and 27 banners. All these were under the Department of the Marches (Mongolian and Tibetan Dependencies) and followed the patterns it set. Besides these regular forms, there were several exceptions: (1) the three banners of the Tumed tribe near Kueihua, the eight banners of the Chahar tribe, and the grazing lands of the E-lu-te tribe near Jehol have no jassak (the Tumed and Chahars had them once, but because of a rebellion against the Manchus these were absolished), but are ruled by military governors nearby; (2) the Alashan and Edsingol Banners are independent, belonging to no league; (3) there have always been irregulars, such as lama banners.

Towards the end of the Manchu regime many Hans settled in Mongolia, opening the land to cultivation. In this territory of mixed population new political districts were organized and put under the control of the military governors in those regions. This affected the Mongolian banner system considerably.

When the Republic was established the old Manchu system was in the main continued. The Department of the Marches was renamed the Bureau of Mongolian and Tibetan Affairs. In 1914 Jehol, Chahar, and Suiyuan were organized as Special Administrative Districts, each with a military governor similar to that of Manchu days. In 1928 Inner Mongolia was organized into provinces and the leagues and banners put under their control. In 1930 a conference was held to consider pertinent questions and soon thereafter a plan of organization for Mongolian leagues, tribes and banners was issued. Its chief provisions as to area and control are as follows: "All Mongolian leagues, tribes, and banners shall each retain its own territory, but these may be changed by legal process when necessary (Sec 2); "All Mongols living in the territory of any league, tribe, or banner shall be citizens thereof, with equality of rights and duties" (Sec 3); "Each Mongolian league and special banner shall be directly responsible to the Executive Yuan" (Sec 5); "When any Mongolian league or special banner has a matter of concern to the province it should arrange with the provincial government for settlement" (Sec 6); "Mongolian banners responsible to present leagues and having a matter of concern to the hsiens should arrange with hsien government for settlement" (Sec 7); "Hsiens and provinces set up in Mongolian territory, having matters of concern to leagues or banners should settle same with officials of said groups" (Sec 8); "All military and diplomatic and other administrative matters in Mongolia are directly related with the government of the Republic" (Sec 9).

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From now on the Mongolian banners are under the government and provinces and not under the Committee on Mongolian and Tibetan Affairs. This is a great change. As to organization and officials, a chairman, deputy chairman, and minor functionaries make up a league office. When needed, the Committee may ask the Executive Yuan to set up special commissions.

Besides the league government, there is a league assembly, elected by the banners, each delegate holding the office one year, to discuss matters of league concern (Secs 16-18). Banner affairs are handled by a committee which replaced the former officials. Vacancies are to be filled from twice the number [of vacancies], nominees being chosen by the banner assembly, recommended by the jassak, and selected and appointed by the Executive Yuan. The banner assembly is similar to that of the league and is popularly elected (Secs 22-32). This document is the basis of the present administration in Mongolia, and the legal basis for maintaining leagues and banners. But the basic principle is still hereditary succession, especially since there is no prescription for producing league chairmen and jassaks. As for the more progressive provisions of the document, they are rarely carried out with strictness, and the Central Government has not exercised legal supervision.

After 18 September [1931], Prince Teh and a few other princes, and Mongol youths stirred up by the enemy and puppets, developed a false "self-government" in 1933. After many rebuffs, they were allowed by the Central Government in 1934 to set up at Pailing-miao a "Political Committee for Local Mongolian Autonomy," made up of the princes and directly answerable to the Executive Yuan. They received guidance from the "Mongolia-Tibet Commission" and the "Guiding Official of Mongolian Local Autonomy" and consulted with provincial officials on matters concerning the province. This was an organization for linking up the leagues, so whether its organization was justifiable or not, the "self-government" it exemplified was illusory. Its true motivation was easily discernible by any intelligent person. No high-minded Mongols were willing to be under its control so they escaped from it. Thereupon a "Guiding Official for Local Autonomy of Mongolian Leagues and Banners in Suiyuan Province" was set up in 1936. After the war of resistance broke out, the "Chahar Mongolian Banners' Special Commissioner's Office" was set up to handle Mongolian matters; but as the war went on, Chahar and Suiyuan were occupied, and the Mongols there fell under enemy control. The great majority resisted patriotically, and their allegiance was clear from then on. After victory came, although traitors set up the "Eastern Mongolia Autonomous Government," yet the vast majority of Mongols, having experienced a spiritual change through the war, we believe are absolutely patriotic. Their taste of "autonomy" with its rules and offices, has brought them no real fruits of autonomy. Now is the time for honest and humble thought.

As for the present conditions of the Mongolian leagues and banners, there have been many changes. The banners and tribes in Manchuria before 18 September experienced sudden changes under enemy rule, and after redemarcating the provinces in June of this year, with new combinations and the formation of hsiens, there remain 11 banners [in Manchuria]. In Jehol there are the Josotc League (7 banners), Joude League (13 banners)

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and the Silingol League (10 banners). In Chahar are the four banners and four grazing lands of the Chahar tribe. In Suiyuan are the Ulanchab League (6 banners), the Ikhchao League (7 banners), the four East Suiyuan Banners of the Chahar tribe, the Kuei-hua Tumed Special Banner, etc. In Ningsia are the Alashan and Etsingol Special Banners. In Tsinghai are the Left Wing League (13 banners) and the Right Wing League (16 banners). In Sinkiang there are the Bato Selkhitu League (3 banners), Unen Susuktu League (10 banners), and Ching Setkhitu League (10 banners). Of late years these people in Sinkiang and Tsinghai have been most peaceful, being long accustomed to provincial government; what troubles arise are in Inner Mongolia.

IV

From this explanation we can see that giving leagues and banners a definite political meaning came after the plan of organization of Leagues and Banners was issued in 1933. The attainment of further "autonomy" was still later, and was then only partial. All these arrangements were hastened by the existing political conditions. Now that domestic and international events are moving so rapidly and former arrangements proving so ineffective, new plans must, of course, be considered. Local systems in a nation need not be too rigid; the prerequisite of good government is adaptability to people and place. We all know that in modern times a variety of governments and systems have been permitted to meet varying habits of life and economic circumstances. Consequently, similar administrative units may have a variety of names, and the inter-relationship of political levels need not be rigorously systematic. The most remarkable example is the local systems of the many and varied tribes of the Soviet Union. But with it all, there must be one common principle: that is, that local variations in political structure do not affect national organic unity, but become effective tools for fulfilling national functions, just as in a machine the coordination of the various parts forms the machine's individuality. And while the local systems in England and America are organized from the ground upwards, from small to large, in a perfectly natural web of relationships, those of the Soviet Union are quite different. They represent still another national policy or a policy of ruling, quite different from ordinary autonomy. When this point is clear, Mongol autonomy can be placed in proper perspective.

Of late the autonomy asked by the Mongols has been to retain the leagues and banners as they are, that is, to equate banners with hsiens and leagues with provinces, as a principle, in order to realize self-government fully. Their reasons are: (1) Leagues and banners are original units of Mongol autonomy. Dr. Sun's teachings and fundamental plans for the nation all show the principle of racial equality. Therefore, the original Mongol autonomy cannot be abolished. (2) The Central Government's plan of organization of leagues, tribes and banners, and other relevant laws, and repeated resolutions of party conferences, all contain decisions for retaining the existing leagues and banners. (3) Mongols have had enough of oppression by Han officials; if leagues and banners are done away with, their freedom and rights will be even less protected. We do not insist that Mongolian territory must be put under province and hsien administration like the rest of the country, and we accept unreservedly the principle of racial equality. But we must analyze and study these demands of the Mongols and their reasons.

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One thing must be said first: that is, that in discussing the survival of leagues and banners, we take an objective, impartial standpoint — the viewpoint of political fitness and the convenience of Mongols in realizing autonomy. We will first consider the banners. They were first a way of demarcating territory and have existed for over 200 years. The Mongols of course want to maintain their own organization, and we in principle approve banners as units of Mongol autonomy; yet under this principle, because the facts so demand, there are certain reservations and some features needing further study. First, let us consider the question of hsiens already established, or banners with offices, or the organization of offices in banners where both Hans and Mongols live. The historical relation between Mongols and our nation has existed a long time, and of course we had dealings with one another. Only in the early years of the Manchu regime was a policy of division between Hans and Mongols adopted. At times Mongols were forbidden to rent land to Hans, marriage was prohibited, and trade restricted; therefore normal relations could not exist. Because these regulations were unnatural, they were never fully enforced and in time became wholly ineffective. Consequently, Mongols and Hans drew closer together, and, especially in Inner Mongolia, the two races lived side by side. Except for Manchu machinations, Mongols and Hans would have been amalgamated by now and there would be no division or dispute. As it is, in many banners Hans outnumber Mongols, giving rise to hsiens or offices; a large number of Hans also live in other banners. In the former case to return to the banner system would not only be needless trouble, but also indefensible on the arguments of the Mongols themselves; in the latter case, the question is more complex. There are objections to setting up either hsiens or offices, and it seems that the form of government should be decided by a plebiscite.

Secondly, banners have never existed in large parts of Mongolian territory, and even those that do exist vary greatly in area, population, and physical conditions. Consequently, in building Mongol autonomy on banners we should not use the existing banners as fixed, but, when necessary, combine or reorganize them. Otherwise, the machinery will be very hard to set up, and administration will be quite difficult.

Thirdly, in banners that are to become units of self-rule, the political organization and functions of officials should, of course, be entirely different from that in the present banners. While in theory the organizational form of banners need not be the same as that of ordinary hsien, yet the basic principles of implementing autonomy must be similar. Therefore, all systems of nobility, land, and enforced service in the modern banners must be abolished, and banner government and Mongol ideas should be reformed under conditions of true self-rule. This is necessary because banners that practise self-rule are units of Mongolian political life, and are, of course, quite different from mere tools by which the Manchu court ruled the Mongols. As to equating banners with hsiens within the matters mentioned above, they are already not far apart, and, accordingly, the problem no longer exists.

Now, as to leagues, and an explanation of why the Mongols retain them. It was said above that leagues were at first clearinghouses for the common problems of the banners and the settling of disputes, but lacking routine business could not be considered as administrative units. Only in

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the later stages of the Manchu dynasty were the leagues gradually given definite responsibilities. However, that was a Manchu policy for controlling the banners, and the league itself had autonomy neither in form nor in fact. In view of the fact that jassaks took turns in presiding over the league, its nature becomes evident. Though later the League became a link between the Department of the Marches and the banners, nevertheless, the leagues and banners all were under the Department's control, with no opportunity for "self-determination" or "self-management." After the Republic came to power, the league became more of a political organ, and the function of the organization of leagues, tribes, and banners was to meet the exigencies of the situation, with obvious advantages and disadvantages. In discussing the final disposition of the leagues, we need not be influenced by their original nature, and still less by the present special arrangements. If the league is a regional government controlling the banners, with a position corresponding to that of a province directly responsible to the Central Government, then many difficulties and unsuitable features arise. First, the league's administrative areas cannot be joined together. For example, the Ikhchao League in southern Suiyuan has a mixture of banners and hsiens; if the Ikhchao League is made into a single administrative area, how will the hsiens be handled without utter confusion? When a league spans several provinces, the problem is still greater. Secondly, with respect to population and finances a league cannot compare to a province as a political unit; thus, even if it is clearly separated from existing provinces, there is harm to national unity and defense. Thirdly, when the division of powers between the league and the province is not clearly defined, even though all is secure in the regions controlled, there may be lack of coordination. Furthermore, under conditions where Hans and Mongols are living together, how can conflicts as to rights and duties be avoided between the league and the province? This is already a serious enough condition throughout Inner Mongolia. How can we afford in the future to make countless mistakes and leave behind us ceaseless dissension? Fourthly, the idea of Mongols ruling Mongols (whether in fact or not) is fully possible under the banner as a unit of self-rule, and there seems no further necessity for the league to control the banners. Accordingly, for banners and hsiens alike to be under the province is a natural and fair arrangement. Perhaps here the Mongols will bring up the argument "Hans are oppressing Mongols." But in our constitution provincial self-rule is also practised. Banners, as integral parts of provinces, can share in decisions and actions of the provincial government. On the democratic road, oppression of any by any is indefensible, and there is no need for leagues directly responsible to the Central Government to become a device for protecting the Mongols' right to freedom. From these considerations, we may see that the growth of leagues will bring inconvenience and trouble both to the government and to Hans and Mongols, and to oppose this growth will not be wrong in any sense. We hope that the plan of organization for leagues, tribes, and banners will be revised, and a careful study be made of the Mongols' demand for expanding the leagues. As for the question of giving the leagues another position as election districts, lack of space forbids its discussion here.

To sum up: We indeed hope that the Mongols may exercise true and full self-rule, and that they will have good and progressive machinery for autonomy. But our higher hope, resting on the true unity of the Chinese nation and the prosperity of the Chinese Republic, is that the Mongols will practice the same sort of autonomy as the 400 million, that the system of Mongol autonomy will earnestly avoid any obstruction to national unification.

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In the present difficult time for the nation, we earnestly pray and hope that this major problem can be satisfactorily settled at an early date.

Present Mongol tribes are not discussed here because they are a matter of blood relationship in each banner, and long ago lost all political significance.

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